



SIERRA CLUB

Connecticut Chapter
P.O. Box 270595
West Hartford, Connecticut 06127
connecticut.sierraclub.org

Testimony Before the Environment Committee on 1.30.23

Dear Environment Chairs Lopes and Gresko, Vice-Chairs Hochadel and Palm, Ranking Members Harding and Callahan, and distinguished members of the Environment Committee,

On behalf of the Sierra Club and our more than 40,000 members and supporters in Connecticut, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today.

The Sierra Club is committed to defending everyone's right to a healthy world by tackling the serious challenges of a warming climate, unprecedented levels of pollution, the waste management crisis, biodiversity loss, and the dangers of toxics.

S.B. No. 895 AN ACT CONCERNING DEPOSIT INITIATOR ACCOUNTS AND CARBONATED BEVERAGES.

Sierra Club Connecticut opposes Senate Bill 895. This bill would exempt spirited-based cocktails and canned cocktails from the definition of "carbonated beverages". This exemption could potentially exempt most hard seltzers/ hard ciders. Removing these containers from the definition would take them out of the bottle bill process, which has been shown time and again to be the most effective and cost efficient way of recycling and reusing beverage containers. It also would put the responsibility of recycling these containers onto the municipalities, who are already struggling with the financial burden and maintenance of recycling programs. It also would create confusion at beverage stores and with the consumer.

If you take a look at the updated Bottle Bill language in Public Act 21-58, Section 1 (1), it reads, "Carbonated beverage" means beer or other malt beverages, hard seltzer, hard cider and mineral waters, soda water and similar carbonated soft drinks in liquid form and intended for human consumption;". The words hard seltzer and hard cider are underlined, indicating that this is new language. Clearly the intent of the bill when passed was to include these beverages under the law. To remove them now would violate the original intent and preclude a substantial amount of containers from our flagship recycling law.

Only with a strong, consistent redemption law will the program run at full capacity and achieve its intended purpose. Attempts to weaken it, or exempt obviously intended covered containers will impede the program and incur additional costs and burdens to the state and municipalities, stores, and to the consumer.

S.B. No. 896 AN ACT CONCERNING TREE REMOVAL ON PROPERTIES UNDER THE CONTROL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Sierra Club Connecticut supports Senate Bill 896. We believe public process and transparency are extremely important to processes involving removal of trees in state parks. We have been quite alarmed about the extent of tree removal within our state parks, taking away some of our best resources for ecosystem preservation, wildlife habitat protection, and carbon capture as a climate solution. They are also important for the health and well-being of people. Essentially, trees take care of every other living thing on the planet, we need to be mindful and do our due diligence when removing them, especially from a protected area like a state park.



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This bill would require the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection to consult with an independent arborist in determining which trees should be removed, notify the public of removal of a tree and give the public a chance to weigh in. They would also have to consider the effect on the surrounding environment, explore other options for treatment of diseased trees, and require replanting of similar trees. All of these provisions help to make this process more transparent and thorough, limiting the unnecessary removal of trees and including the public in state park protection and preservation.

One suggestion to improve the bill would be to designate some funds in it so DEEP will be able to administer this program effectively and be able to fairly compensate an outside arborist.

H.B. No. 6481 AN ACT CONCERNING THE INTENTIONAL RELEASE OF CERTAIN BALLOONS

Sierra Club supports HB 6481 with some recommendations. The amount of plastic that contaminates our land and waterways is extremely concerning. It is a threat to our wildlife and ecosystems, and to the health of our citizens. The production of plastic items contributes greatly to greenhouse gas emissions that are warming our atmosphere and causing the climate crisis that is already upon us. Helium balloons pollute our environment and endanger wildlife. Helium balloons, their strings and ties often end up snaring birds or aquatic wildlife, or get swallowed when the animals mistake the latex or foil for food. They do not biodegrade and instead break up into microplastics. Releasing them into the atmosphere is dangerous and unnecessary. We recommend amending this bill to include a total prohibition on the release of helium balloons and recommend a public education component at the point of sale to inform consumers about the policy and their responsibilities under the law. It should not be allowed.

.H.B. No. 6482 AN ACT AUTHORIZING BONDING FOR BIKEWAYS, GREENWAYS AND RECREATIONAL TRAILS

Sierra Club Connecticut supports HB 6482. Bikeways, greenways and recreation trails provide a multitude of benefits to people, the environment, and to the economy. There has been an uptick on Connecticut trails of bikers, walkers, skaters, runners, and dog walkers in recent years.

People utilize these areas as part of a healthy, fun lifestyle. Encouraging folks to utilize other means of getting around also reduces transportation pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, which helps to improve air quality and address the climate crisis.

Connecticut's trails and greenways can provide economic benefit to businesses and increase tourism. They can improve property values nearby. They attract young families to live in Connecticut. There are also environmental and ecosystem benefits to maintaining open space corridors, particularly along rivers and streams. We urge support of this bill.

H.B. No. 6484 AN ACT CONCERNING CERTAIN HARVESTING OF HORSESHOE CRABS

Sierra Club Connecticut supports HB 6484 as it will have an immediate and significant impact on the horseshoe crab (*Limulus polyphemus*) population of Long Island Sound.



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The horseshoe crab population in Long Island Sound has been unstable for quite some time. There was a point in recent memory where they all but disappeared from our shores and waters. Scientific assessments show the population of female horseshoe crabs is a fraction of what it was 30 years ago, even ten years ago on the CT coast. While they have rebounded from near extinction, they still face many threats to the survival of their species. Aside from habitat loss, the greatest threat they currently face by far is the hand-harvesting by commercial fisherman to be used as bait.

For the last 4 decades the American horseshoe crab has been harvested in substantial numbers (approximately 500,000 annually) for bait in the American eel and snail fisheries despite alternatives being readily available. Since whelks are not particularly fussy as to what they eat, any protein source can be used, including spoiled shellfish discarded from suppliers and roadkill. In fact, the invasive *Carcinus maenas*, the red/green crab which seems to be taking over native crustacean populations in the Sound, is a viable and readily available option.

The loss of horseshoe crabs affects many other species in the ecosystem including birds like the red knot and the plover, which are suffering from climate change. Horseshoe Crabs are a food source for these birds as they migrate 9000 miles from Latin America to the Arctic Tundra.

Horseshoe crabs have been an important part of the coastal ecosystem since the Paleozoic era. If the species numbers are allowed to decline further, it will most certainly have a direct irrevocable and detrimental impact on the health of our coastal waters. In addition, horseshoe crabs play a quintessential role in ensuring the safety of pharmaceutical products and medical devices. Protection of the global horseshoe crab population is therefore essential for the continued safeguarding of human health.

The red knots need them, the plovers need them, humanity needs them. Please vote to protect these ancient mariners.

H.B. No. 6486 AN ACT CONCERNING EXTENDED PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY FOR TIRES

Sierra Club Connecticut opposes HB 6486. Sierra Club supports strong, beneficial Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) legislation. Unfortunately, HB 6486 is not strong, or beneficial, or even a true EPR bill. It is a self-serving industry bill. We need a bill that will ensure consumer convenience, meet performance goals, provide effective education, and outreach, fund the program from point of sale, and protect human and environmental health.

As we are all well aware, disposal of tires is often difficult, costly, and lack of resources to do so contributes to roadside litter and illegal dumping. The amount of illegal dumped tires is staggering and current practices in disposal are environmentally unfriendly and potentially dangerous. So requiring tire manufacturers to be responsible for the entire life cycle of their product is a great step towards reducing the strain tire disposal puts on individuals, municipalities, and on our environment. It also will create more jobs and a growing industry.



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Last year's bill on tire EPR, HB 5139, although imperfect, was a much better bill than this years. It created a stewardship organization of tire industry folks that would be responsible for ensuring consumer convenience in the disposal of tires without the burden of a fee, meet performance goals, provide education and outreach, and fund the program. Sierra Club Connecticut would recommend making that bill even stronger by requiring the stewardship organization to include environmental and health experts. We would also like to see language in there requiring the protection of human health when planning the recycling of tires, so that toxic shredded tires do not end up on playgrounds or athletic fields, putting our children at risk.

We have a real chance here to make a difference in our management of toxic and burdensome tire disposal. Let's do the right thing.

Thank you for consideration of our testimony.

Sincerely,

Ann Gadwah, Advocacy and Outreach Organizer
Sierra Club Connecticut